

**CH-540**

**circa 1910**

**Fenwick Store & Post Office**

**Fenwick vic.**

**Private**

The Fenwick Store & Post Office building is a simple 1-story, front gable frame structure erected circa 1910. Originally located on the waterfront in the resort community of McGhiesport, later Fenwick, the post office had to be moved to its present location some time before 1944 due to severe shoreline erosion. The building once featured board-and-batten cladding, shuttered windows and a full-width front porch. Otherwise, the building retains its historic form and many original features.

The post office is a remnant of a bustling early 20th century community that was established here around 1909 as a summer cottage resort. The building is one of only a few of the original structure in the town that remains intact. Used as both a store and a postal stop, the building served as the locus of community life for nearly 40 years.

## MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Inventory No. CH-540

## MD INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

## =====

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Fenwick Store & Post Office

Common/other name \_\_\_\_\_

## =====

## 2. Location

street & number Next to 5905 Fenwick Rd not for publication \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Fenwick vicinity X state Maryland code MD  
county Charles code 017 zip code 20616

## =====

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

N/A

## =====

## 4. National Park Service Certification

N/A

## =====

## 5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check all that apply)

☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing      Noncontributing

<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Is this property listed in the National Register?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Listing \_\_\_\_\_

No X

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-540

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>GOVERNMENT</u>	Sub: <u>Post Office</u>
<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	<u>General store</u>
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Vacant</u>	Sub: _____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Vernacular Craftsman

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>pier: concrete block?</u>
roof	<u>front gable: asphalt shingles</u>
walls	<u>wood frame: German siding</u>
other	_____
	_____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 7-1

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-540

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8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☒ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-540

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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance circa 1910 - circa 1950  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates circa 1910  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation Undefined  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 8-1

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-540

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, legal records, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Brown, Jack D., et al. *Charles County, Maryland, A History*. Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Charles County Land Records. Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

Klapthor, Margaret Brown. *The History of Charles County, Maryland*. La Plata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.

*Personal interview with Joseph Olcott, long time Fenwick resident and historian, April 1999. (Mr. Olcott retains numerous early photos of Fenwick places & people, as well as having completed in depth research on the residents and owners of the various early cottages).*

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 7.299 acres

**Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)**

The property is designated as Parcel 535 on Map 5, Grid 8 on the Charles County Property Map.

**Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)**

The Fenwick Post Office has been associated with Parcel 535, Map 5 since it was moved from its original waterfront site sometime prior to 1944.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-540

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Kathryn Gettings Smith, Architectural Historian  
organization Charles County Planning Dept. date May 21, 1999  
street & number P.O. Box B telephone 301-645-0689  
city or town La Plata state MD zip code 20646

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12. Property Owner

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name John M. & Teresa L. Homan  
street & number 5905 Fenwick Road telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Bryans Road state MD zip code 20616

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MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-540

Section 7 Page 1

Fenwick Store & P.O.  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

The Fenwick Store & Post Office building is a simple 1-story, front gable frame structure erected circa 1910. Originally located on the waterfront in the resort community of McGhiesport or Fenwick, the post office had to be moved to its present location some time before 1944 due to severe shoreline erosion. The building once featured board-and-batten cladding, shuttered windows and a full-width front porch. Otherwise, the building retains its historic form and many original features.

Standing on a pier foundation, the small frame post office consists of a modest front gable structure clad in wood German siding and roofed with asphalt shingles. The overhanging eaves contain exposed rafter tails and corner boards define the wall intersections. The facade is pierced by a central single-leaf 5-panel wood door flanked by single windows holding original 6/6 wood sash. Each side wall holds another two window with like sash. A 1-story frame shed addition extends off the building's rear and is lit by 6-light wood awning windows. A single parged concrete flue extends up the exterior rear wall of the building.

There are no associated outbuildings on the site. The building stands on the south side of Fenwick Road where it makes a sharp turn and runs southward past the west side of the building.



MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. Ch-540

Section 8 Page 1

Fenwick Store & P.O.  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

The Fenwick Store & Post Office is a remnant of a bustling early 20th century community that started here around 1909 as a summer cottage resort. The building, which retains its original form and some of its original materials, is one of only a few of the original structure in the town that remains intact. Used as both a store and a postal stop, the building served as the locus of community life for nearly 40 years.

The town of Fenwick began as "McGhiesport," a riverfront vacation spot developed by a Washington, D.C. real estate promoter, Layton McGhie. In 1909, McGhie purchased a tract of land along the Potomac River near what was, at the time, the Pomonkey Fishery.

The property had once been part of James Fenwick's early-19th century plantation known as "Pomonkey" or "Pomonkey Point." Deed records indicate that a house stood somewhere on the 500-acre property prior to 1844.<sup>1</sup> The existence of the Fenwick/Brent Family Graveyard in the present village suggests that the house was located in that vicinity (see Fenwick/Brent Family Graveyard, CH-541).

By the time McGhie purchased the property, there was a "old farmhouse" on the property, along with an "old wharf." A circa-1914 photograph in the possession of Joseph Olcott of Fenwick shows a 2-story, frame I-house with extensive wraparound porches. However, this is not likely the original Fenwick house. That house may have stood slightly farther south on the peninsula, closer to the remaining family graveyard.

In June 1909, McGhie submitted a plat of his new real estate enterprise. Named "McGhiesport," the village was divided into six unequal blocks, containing from four to seventeen lots of 25 feet by 100 feet. Five streets appear on the 1909 plat, including Park Avenue along the waterfront. Accommodation was made for parking, in various areas around the community. McGhie sold the lots for a small down payment and five dollars a month. By 1912 or 1913, approximately thirty summer cottages had been erected in McGhiesport. A post office and general store was also established during these early years. However, within two to three years (according to oral tradition) the residents and owners of lots in

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<sup>1</sup> See deed from Robert J. Brent to Joseph H. Bradley, Charles County Land Records, Liber WM 1, Folio 11-18, recorded January 12, 1844.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-540

Section 8 Page 2

Fenwick Store & P.O.  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

the town became disenchanted with Layton McGhie and his real tactics. Shortly thereafter, the residents took it upon themselves to change the village name from McGhiesport to "Fenwick" after the early owner of the property.

An attempt was made at building and maintaining a permanent Steamboat wharf in 1913-1914 by the Bellview Improvement Company. Incorporated in 1913, the company took up subscriptions and raised funds to erect a wharf. The wharf was completed in 1914, but was badly damaged by ice storms a few short years later. Lacking the funds to repair the wharf, the venture soon fell apart. The company was dismantled in 1918.

The early cottages built in Fenwick were tiny, insubstantial affairs that featured prominent porches, pier foundations, and board-and-batten exterior cladding. The post office and store was a 1-room building located along the waterfront.

Only a portion of the platted community was built as originally shown on the 1909 plat. What was once Park Avenue along the water has eroded away over the years. The resort continued to flourish as a vacation destination mostly for Washingtonians throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Slowly, the residents began expanding and winterizing their original cottages, and a year-round population appeared. Today, the population is nearly all full-time residents, and the modest summer cottages have been transformed or rebuilt as comfortable year-round houses.

There were several prominent residents of Fenwick during the early decades of the 20th century. One, Morris T. Wampler, erected a small, but lavish hunting lodge here around 1926. Wampler, an attorney by trade, served as legal council for gangster Al Capone during his famous tax evasion trial, as well as for Bruno Hoffman, the suspected kidnapper of the Lindbergh baby. Wampler was eventually also tried and convicted of tax evasion and sent to prison in the late 1930s. When he was released from prison, he built a new dwelling which still stands on a portion of his remaining land in Fenwick.<sup>2</sup>

Another prominent resident of Fenwick was federal Judge Daniel Thew Wright who retired from the bench after being linked to illegal

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<sup>2</sup> Interview and research of Joseph Olcott, local Fenwick resident and historian.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-540

Section 8 Page 3

Fenwick Store & P.O.  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====  
dealings associated with the "Teapot Dome" scandal. Around 1925, he built a small summer cottage on the point of land where Pomonkey Creek empties into the Potomac River. The cottage was reputedly designed and built by Harry Wardman, a prominent Washington, D.C. builder. Wright served as Wardman's attorney, and at the time of his death, the judge's estate included several Wardman buildings in Washington, D.C.<sup>3</sup> The Wright Cottage has been significantly altered from its original appearance, but remains standing at the end of Fenwick Road (5610 Fenwick Road).

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<sup>3</sup> Interview and research of Joseph Olcott, local resident and historian.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-540

Fenwick Store & P.O.  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

**HISTORIC CONTEXT:**

**Geographic Organization:** Western Shore

**Chronological/Development Period (s):**

Industrial/Urban Dominance, 1870-  
1930  
Modern Period, 1930-present

**Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s):**

Government/Law  
Economic (Commerce)

**RESOURCE TYPE(S)**

**Category:** Building

**Historic Environment:** Rural

**Historic Function (s):** GOVERNMENT/Post Office  
COMMERCE/General Store

**Known Design Source:** Unknown

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-540

Fenwick Store & P.O.  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

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**Chain of Title:**

March 27, 1902: Elizabeth & Henry Kintz to Samuel George  
Mortgage  
269 acres, 1 rood  
"all that tract that was allotted to Henrietta C. Forrest by commissioners appointed by Circuit Court under a petition filed by John W. Jenkins, et al. for a division of the real estate of William H. Plowden, deceased, it being designated by the commissioners as that part of Pomonkey consisted of two separate tracts marked lot no. 1 on a plat made by James Brawner and filed with the case papers, December 1, 1869"

October 12, 1908: Samuel K. George of Baltimore City to Layton J. McGhie  
2 parcels: 12 acres plus 11 acres  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber FDM 19 Folio 511

July 12, 1909: Layton J. McGhie of Washington, DC to Willard F. Miller of Washington, DC  
part of "Pomonkey Point Farm" 10 acres plus Lots no. 11 & 12, block 3 in "McGhiesport"

May 20, 1929: F. Brooke Matthews, Treasurer of Charles County to W. Mitchell Digges  
Tax sale: May 28, 1912  
\$105  
10 acres plus Lots no. 11 & 12 of Block 3 "McGhiesport"  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber WMA 50 Folio 221

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
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Fenwick Store & P.O.  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

May 31, 1929:	W. Mitchell Digges to Edwin J. Schuyler Lots no. 11 & 12 in Layton McGhie's subdivision of "Pomoukey Farm" Charles County Land Records Liber WMA 50 Folio 224
September 1942:	Will of Annie B. Schuyler, widow of Edwin Schuyler Devised land to Carolyn Homan Charles County Register of Wills Liber 25 Folio 187
April 27, 1962:	Cordelia E. Clark to Carolyn A. & Roy M. Homan Parcels 1, 2 & 3 described below Charles County Land Records Liber 157 Folio 537
October 21, 1976:	Gregory A. & Susan R. Torney to Roy M. & Carolyn A. Homan Charles County Land Records Liber 469 Folio 234
August 3, 1985:	Philip S. Homan, personal rep. of the estate of Carolyn A. Homan to Roy S. & John E. Homan Lot 1, Block 8 "Fenwick" Charles County Land Records Liber 1090 Folio 376
April 3, 1985:	Philip S. Homan, personal rep. of the estate of Carolyn A. Homan to Roy & John Homan Charles County Land Records Liber 1090 Folio 377

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-540

Fenwick Store & P.O.  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

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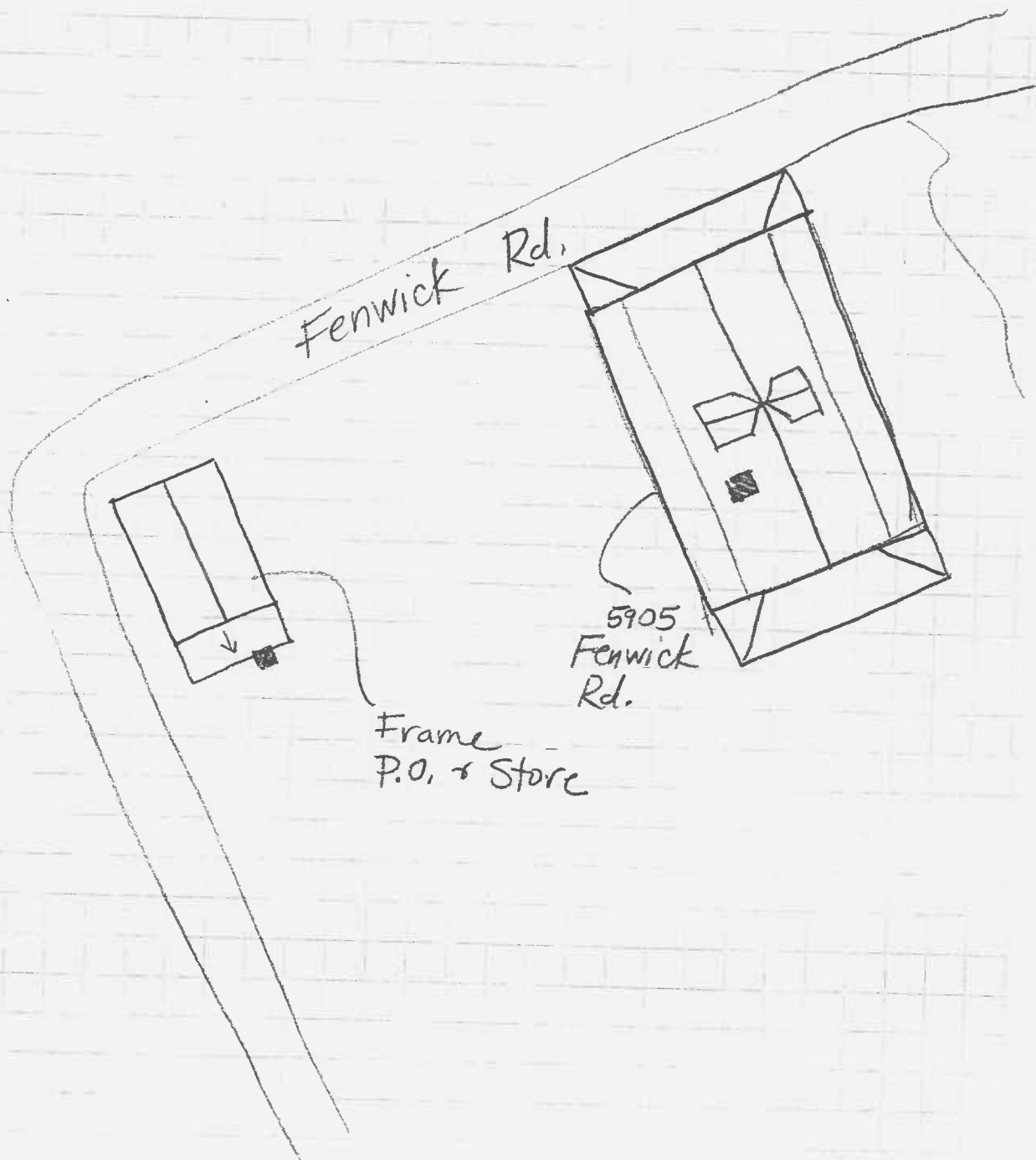
June 27, 1989:

Roy S. Homan & John E. Homan to John  
M. & Teresa L. Homan  
Parcel 1: Lots 14 & 15, Block 8  
"McGhiesport"  
Parcel 2: Lots 11 & 12 in  
McGhiesport  
Parcel 3: Lot no. 1, Block 8 as per  
plat entitled "Fenwick" Plat Book  
HCC 27, Folio 369  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber 1392 Folio 120

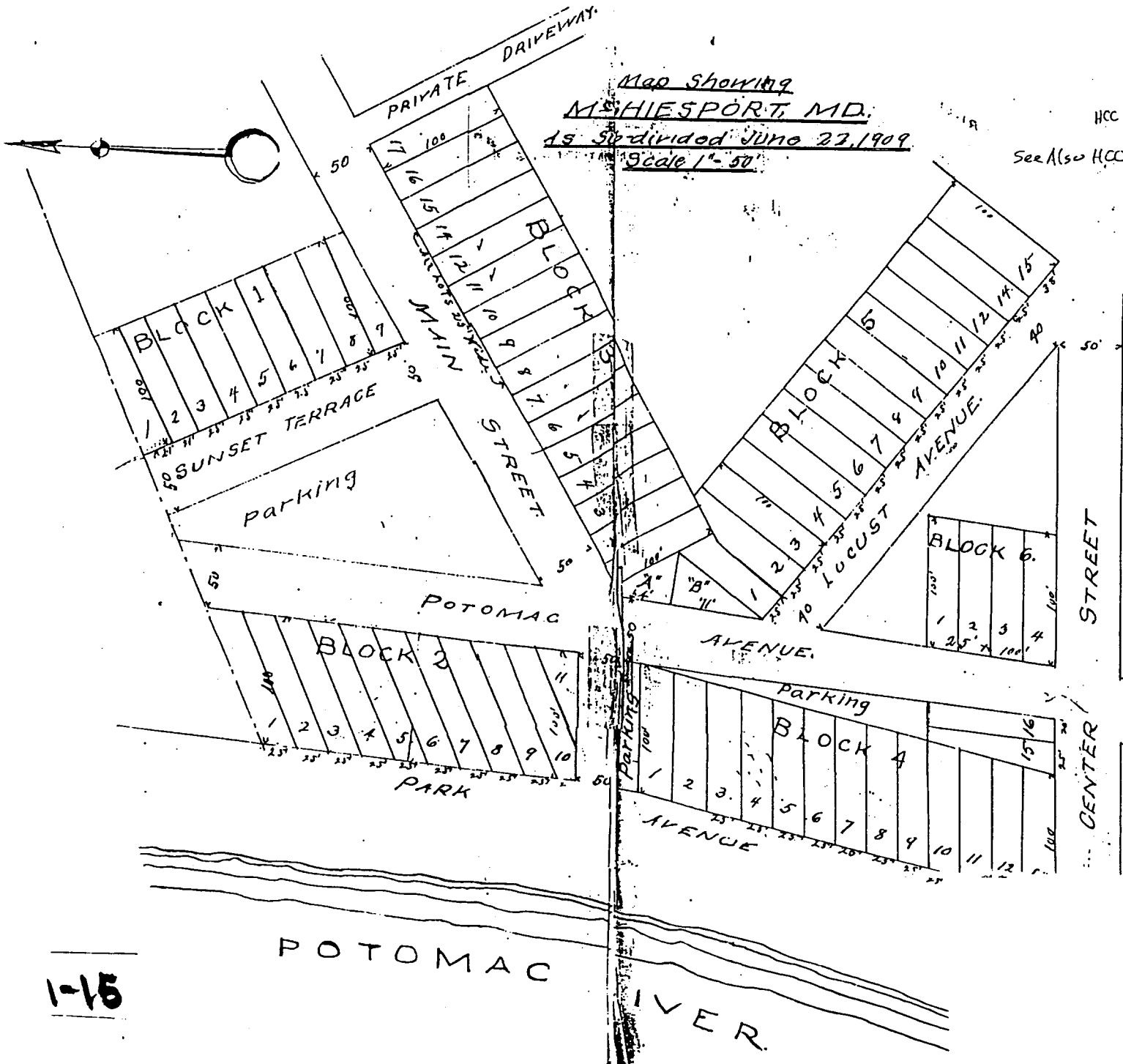
# RESOURCE SKETCH MAP

4/99

FENWICK STORE & POST OFFICE CH-540  
CHARLES COUNTY, MD  
Fenwick vic.







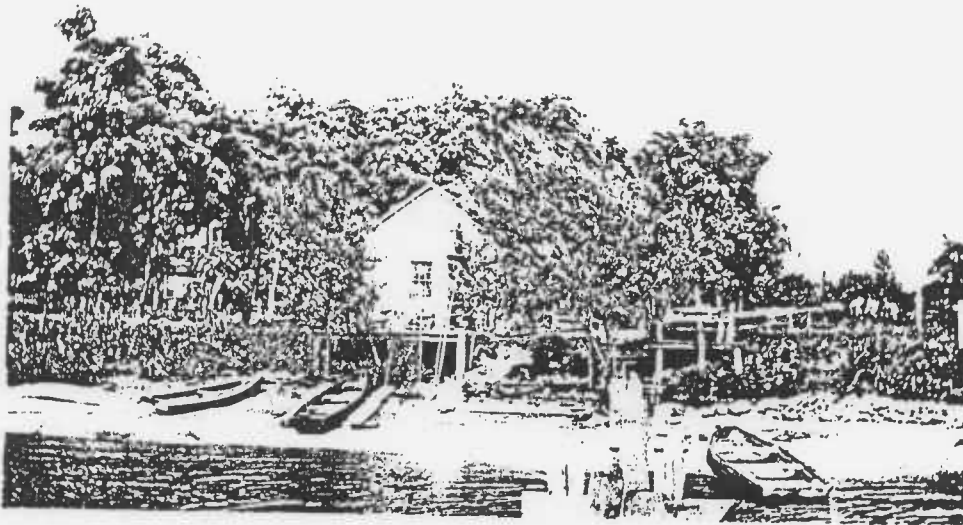
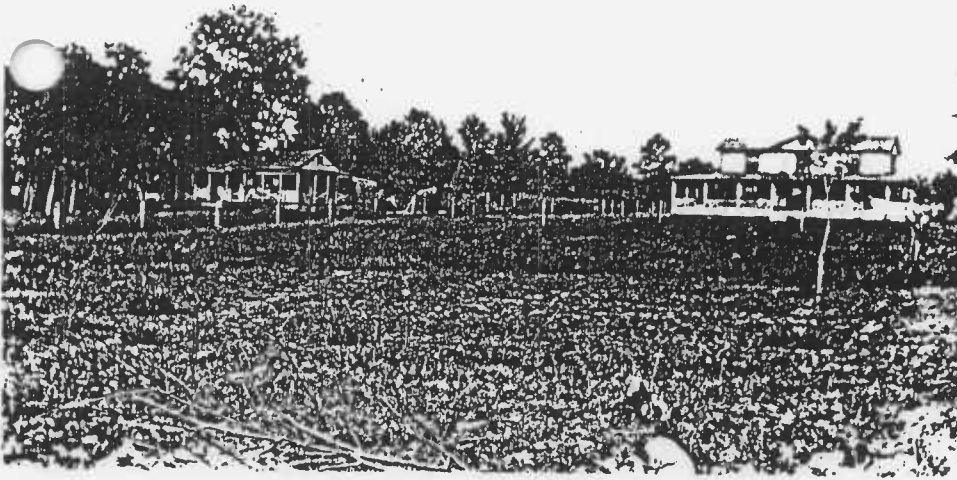
Map Showing  
McChiesport, MD.  
 is subdivided June 22, 1909  
Scale 1" = 50'

HCC 21/59  
 See Also HCC 21/369

Historic Map:  
 Original Plat of McChiesport, MD  
 (later Fenwick)  
 1909  
 Charles County Land Records  
 Miscellaneous Plats, M-15

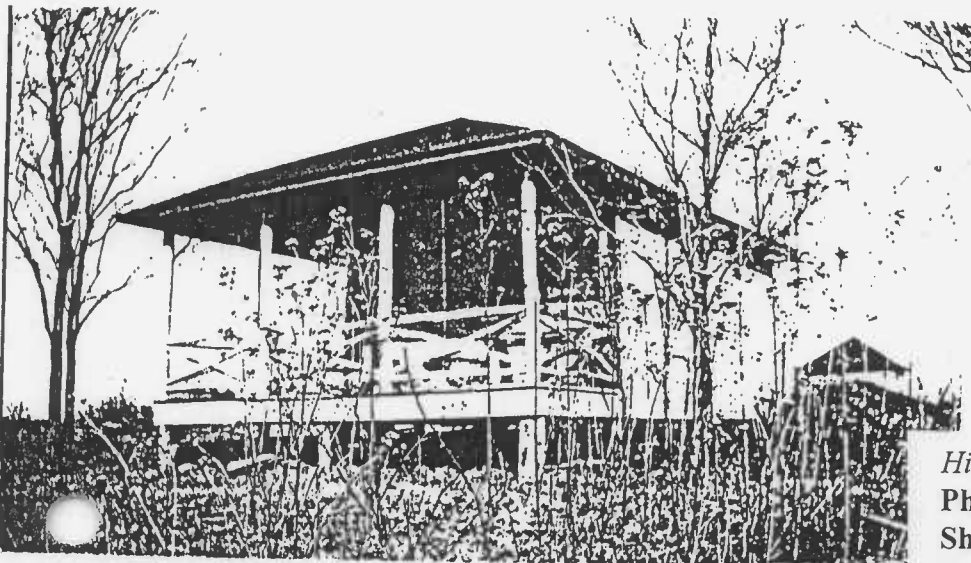
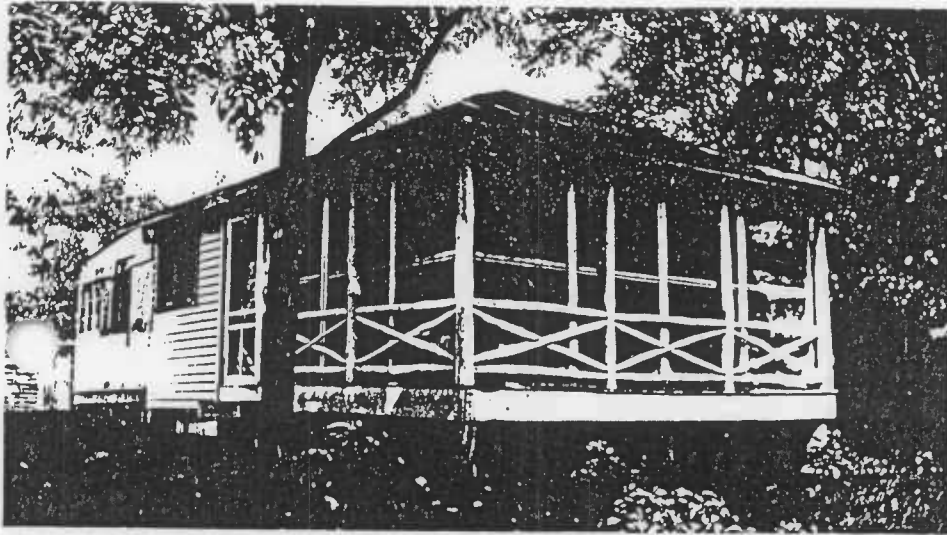
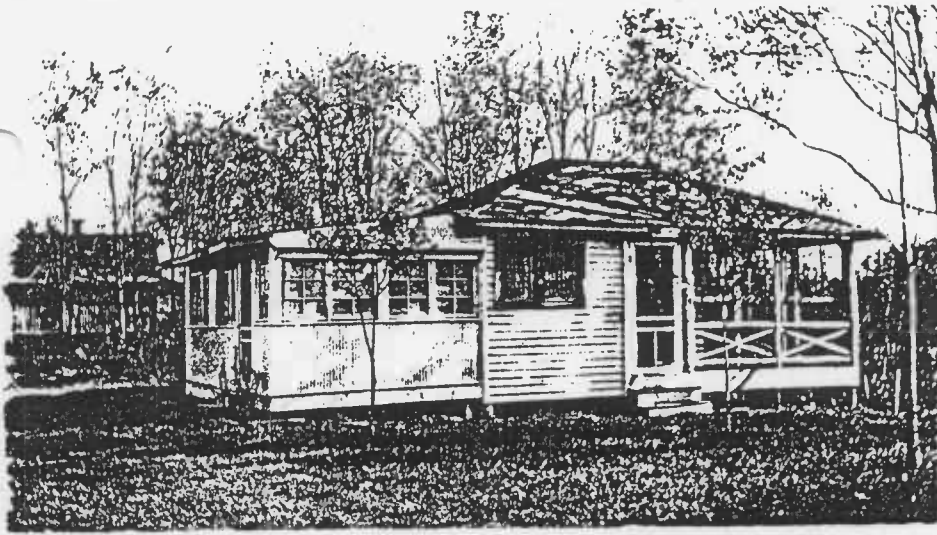
1-15

CH-S40



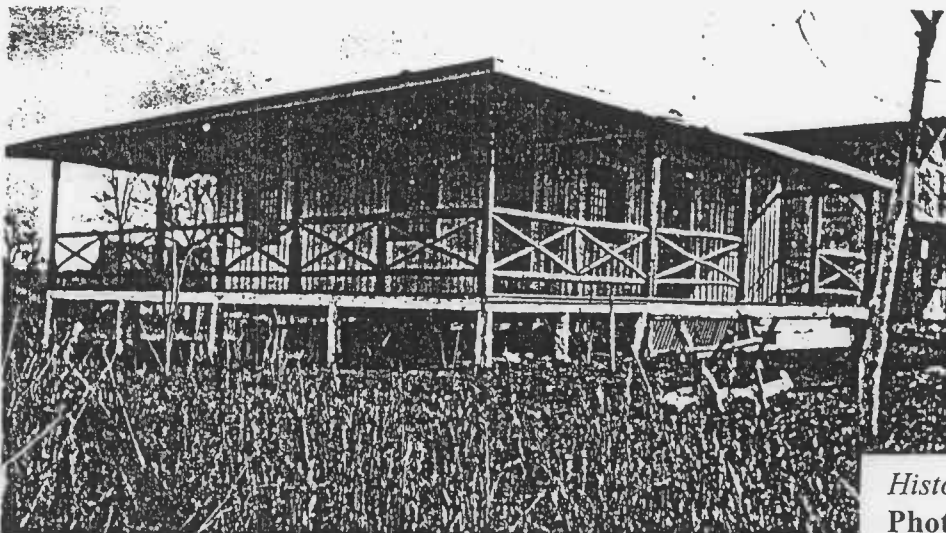
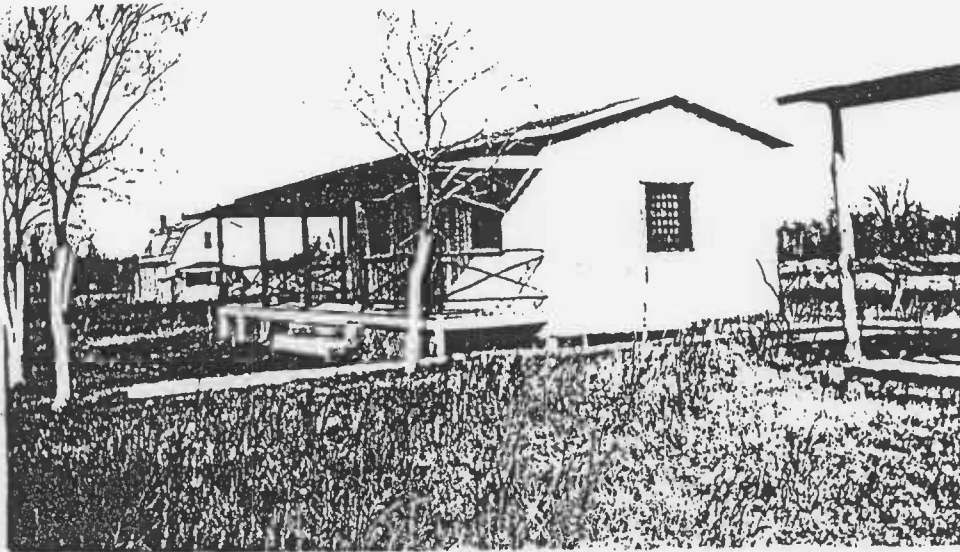
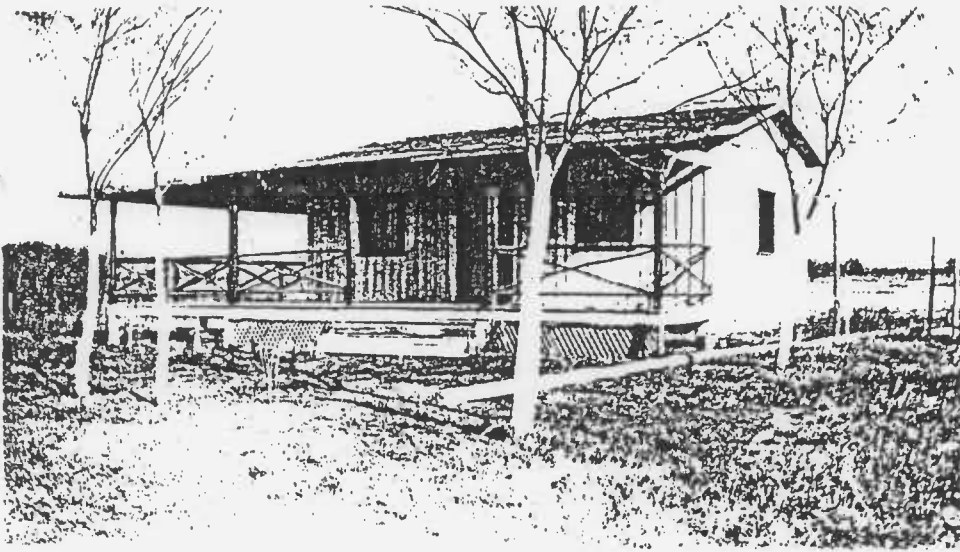
*HistoricPhotographs:*  
Photos of resort community of Fenwick  
Showing original cottages & landscapes  
circa 1914 to circa 1920  
(collection of Joseph Olcott, Fenwick, MD)

CH-540

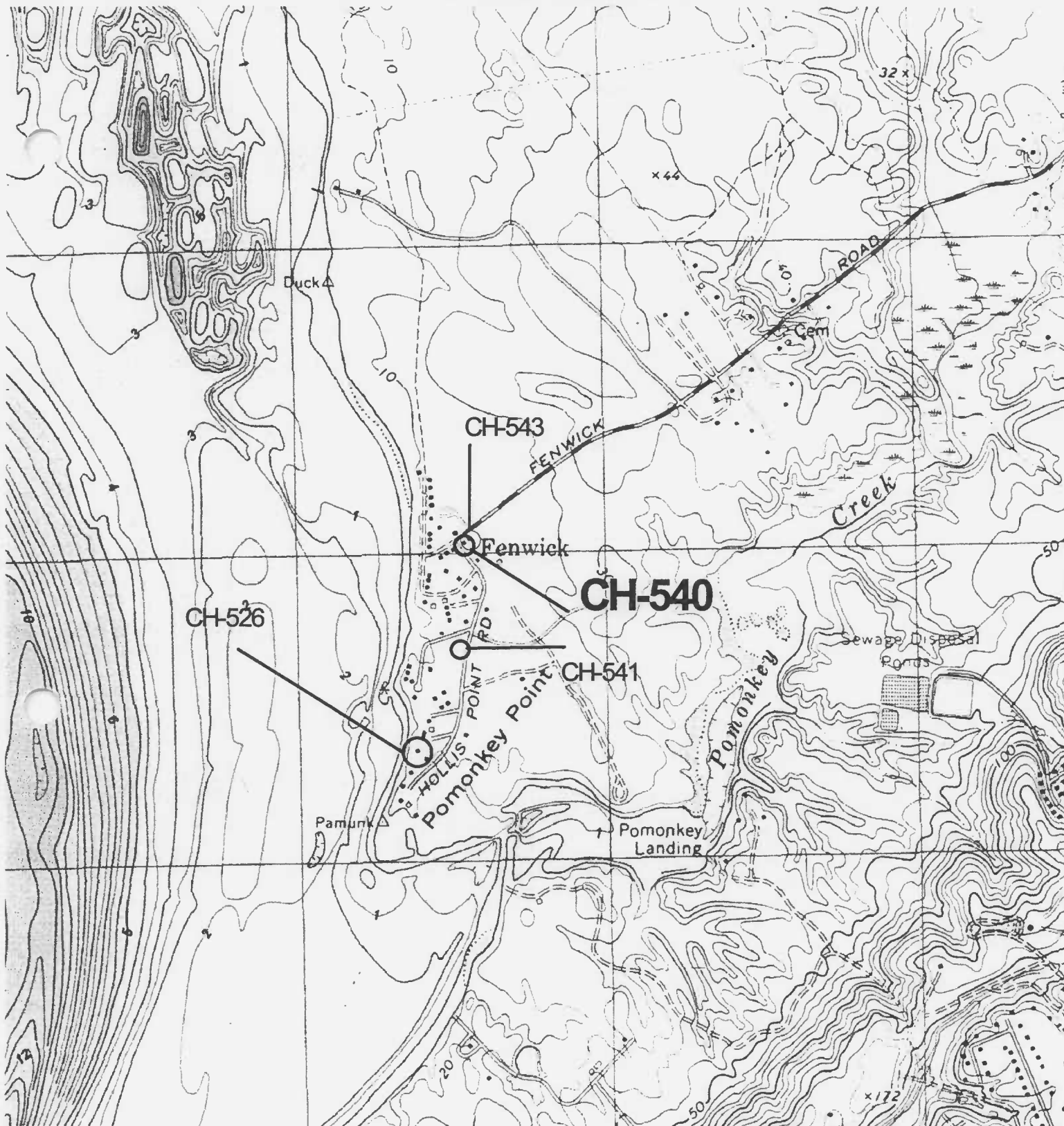


*Historic Photographs:*  
**Photos of resort community of Fenwick  
Showing original cottages & landscapes  
circa 1914 to circa 1920  
(collection of Joseph Olcott, Fenwick, MD)**

CH-540



*Historic Photographs:*  
Photos of resort community of Fenwick  
Showing original cottages & landscapes  
circa 1914 to circa 1920  
(collection of Joseph Olcott, Fenwick, MD)



Fenwick Store & Post Office  
Charles County, MD

CH-540

MOUNT VERNON, MD-VA QUAD



CH-540

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

FENWICK STORE & POST OFFICE

K.G. SMITH

4/99

MARYLAND SHPO

LOOKING SE

1 OF 3



FENWICK STORE & POST OFFICE





CH-540

FENWICK STORE & POST OFFICE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

4/99

MARYLAND SHPO

HISTORIC PHOTO CA. 1915 OF POST OFFICE

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CH-540

FENWICK STORE & POST OFFICE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

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MARYLAND SHPO

HISTORIC PHOTOS OF EARLY FENWICK COTTAGE &  
STEAMBOAT AT FENWICK

3 OF 3